

Reply Refer To: 2670 (FS)/ 1736 (BLM) (OR-935)

Date: April 15, 2003

Dear Reader:

This letter announces the release of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to remove or modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (the Agencies) prepared this Draft SEIS to present the environmental consequences of undertaking different strategies for conserving rare and little known species that are associated with late-successional and old-growth forests within the range of the northern spotted owl. This Draft SEIS supplements the analyses contained in the Final SEIS (2000) for Amendment to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines, and the Final SEIS (1994) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (the Northwest Forest Plan).

The underlying need for this SEIS is to achieve the objectives originally established in the Northwest Forest Plan, to the extent those objectives are frustrated by the Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines. The purposes of the SEIS are to:

1. Continue to provide for diversity of plant and animal communities in accordance with the National Forest Management Act and conserve rare and little known species that may be at risk of becoming listed under the Endangered Species Act.
2. Reduce the Agencies' cost, time, and effort associated with rare and little known species conservation.
3. Restore the Agencies' ability to achieve resource management objectives that were established under the Northwest Forest Plan.

Three alternatives, including no action, are considered in detail in the Draft SEIS. The preferred alternative is Alternative 2 with mitigation. The preferred alternative would remove the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure and the Agencies would rely on their existing Special Status Species Programs to conserve rare species. A decision to select one of the action alternatives would amend the management direction in all 28 Forest Service land and resource management plans and BLM resource management plans in the Northwest Forest Plan area.

The Agencies are soliciting comments on the Draft SEIS. Comments will be accepted via hardcopy mail, facsimile, and the internet. Comments should be sent to:

Survey and Manage
Argonne National Laboratory
EAD/900
9700 South Cass Avenue
Argonne, IL 60439

Facsimile: 1-866-542-5904 (toll free)

Internet: <http://web.ead.anl.gov/surveyandmanage>

The 90-day comment period begins on May 23, 2003, and closes on August 22, 2003. The Agencies ask that those submitting comments on the Draft SEIS make them as specific as possible with references to page numbers and chapters of the document. Comments should address the adequacy of the statement and the merits of the alternatives discussed (40 CFR 1503.3).

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and are available for public inspection. Comments, including names and addresses, may be published as part of the Final SEIS. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public review, or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comments. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request that submissions be withheld from the public record by showing how the FOIA permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The requester will be informed of the agencies' decision regarding the request for confidentiality. Where the request is denied, the comments will be returned to the requester and the requester will be notified that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Anonymous comments do not create standing or a record of participation. All submissions from organizations and business, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

For further information on this SEIS, contact Jerry Hubbard, Survey and Manage SEIS Team Logistics Coordinator, at P.O. Box 2965, Portland, OR 97208; via telephone at 503-326-2355; or via facsimile at 503-326-2396.

Sincerely,

RICHARD C. PRATHER
SEIS Team Leader
Interagency Survey and Manage SEIS Team